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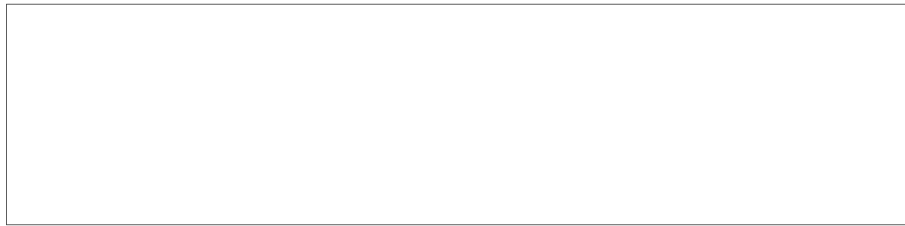
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MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Buildup of Efforts During
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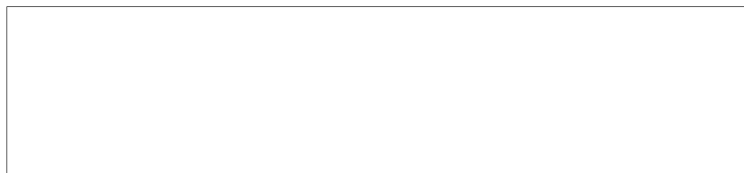
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The Buildup of Efforts During a Front
Offensive Operation
by
General of the Army G. Khetagurov

The timely buildup of efforts in operations has always been one of the most important factors in achieving victory over the enemy. Its purpose is to ensure continuity of an offensive at high speeds and to a great depth, maintain the initiative throughout the operation, and fulfil tasks successfully in the course of the operation. In this connection, the problems of the buildup of efforts occupy an important place in the theory and practice of operational art.

In operations during World War II, the buildup of efforts was accomplished primarily by the commitment to an engagement (battle) of second echelons, mobile groups of various composition, and reserves, that is, by a continuous increase in the number of troops, the use of large masses of tanks, and the establishment on the decisive axes of absolute superiority over the enemy in both forces and means. In view of the fact that the tasks of the operations were fulfilled by formations consecutively, and the troops suffered casualties and lost their offensive capability relatively gradually, the process of the buildup of efforts itself was accomplished methodically.

During the breaching of the enemy defense, the second echelons of regiments, then divisions and corps, entered the battle successively. The breakthrough was exploited by the commitment of tank (mechanized) corps and tank armies, which constitute the second echelon, or of mobile groups of operational formations. Their swift actions led relatively quickly to the achievement of significant operational-
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strategic goals. Army and even front mobile groups were brought in fairly often to complete the breakthrough of the enemy tactical zone of defense, although they were intended to exploit the successes in the operational depth. As a result, their commitment was essentially a continuation of



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the successive buildup of efforts begun at the tactical level.

The buildup of efforts during offensive operations was also accomplished by a movement of troops from the secondary sectors to the decisive axes, and also by the massive use of air and artillery strikes. As aviation and artillery combat capabilities have grown, the importance of these strikes in the buildup of efforts during a war has steadily risen. However, the basic method has remained the commitment of second echelons, reserves, and mobile groups. These principles and methods of the buildup of efforts corresponded to the level of development of the means of armed combat and to the nature of combat operations, and, on the whole, they ensured the successful development of the offensive to a great depth.

New weapons and equipment, and their widespread introduction into all the branches of the armed forces, have radically changed the form and content of the buildup of efforts and the conditions under which the buildup is carried out. Now these questions are decided on a new material basis -- on the basis of missile/nuclear weapons in accordance with a changed organization of troops and changed methods of conducting operations.

An analysis of the possible ways that an aggressor could unleash a war leads us to judge that front operations will be extraordinarily complex in nature.* During a war abrupt changes in the situation and in the nature of combat operations are possible, as are changes in the spatial scope of the operations and the tasks being fulfilled. This will undoubtedly lead to a change in the methods of the buildup of efforts.

* A front operation can include periods of non-nuclear and limited nuclear operations, the decisive nuclear period and the period of concluding operations.

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The buildup of efforts in operations begun with the unlimited use of nuclear weapons and other means of mass destruction will be achieved primarily by the delivery of massive nuclear and chemical strikes. This will enable us to inflict a decisive defeat on enemy groupings, not successively in depth and in time, as was the case in operations in the last war, but all at once. Thus, the buildup of efforts of front troops will also have to be carried out in such a way as to achieve the parallel and equally successful fulfilment of both the immediate and follow-up tasks of the front. It should be noted that the buildup of efforts in an offensive operation will be not only a function of the front, but also one of the most important measures of the Supreme High Command carried out within the framework of a strategic operation.

In addition, nuclear weapons enable us to significantly weaken and even disable an entire opposing grouping of enemy troops in a short space of time. Under these conditions, all that may be expected of front formations is the skilful and timely exploitation of the results of nuclear strikes and the completion of the destruction of the opposing enemy forces. To achieve this it will hardly be necessary to achieve a threefold or fivefold superiority in forces and means, as was done in the past, since an abrupt change in the balance of forces will be achieved as a result of the casualties inflicted on the enemy.

From this it follows that the essence of the buildup of efforts in nuclear warfare operations lies not so much in establishing overwhelming superiority over the enemy, as in achieving and maintaining an advantage in forces and means that will ensure the successful fulfilment by the attacking troops of those tasks that arise during the operation.

The desire on both sides to achieve decisive results with nuclear weapons, and the great mobility of troops, make combat operations extraordinarily diverse and dynamic. On some axes front troops may conduct a successful offensive, on others they might repulse strong enemy counterstrikes, and on still others they could conduct meeting battles or engagements in the event of radioactive contamination of an

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area or a great amount of destruction. Under these conditions it will probably be impossible to build up efforts gradually, as was done in the last war; rather, we shall have to foresee sudden and drastic changes in the situation in a short space of time, at various depths, and at all possible moments during the operation. In contrast to the past, when forces and means intended for a buildup of efforts were used mainly on previously planned axes, in nuclear warfare operations it will often be necessary to redirect them to new, previously unforeseen axes. And this means that rocket troops, aviation, and large units of the second echelon and of the reserve must be in constant readiness during the operation to fulfil tasks that suddenly arise. Continual reconnaissance of all types and timely acquisition of data about the enemy, and the presence in the front of a reserve of nuclear and chemical warheads, also are indispensable conditions for the successful buildup of efforts in a front offensive operation.

Let us now examine the question of what methods of building up efforts for the successful development of an offensive are possible under modern conditions. We should note at the outset that they should not be looked upon as a single type, since in essence they represent a whole complex of interrelated actions that coalesce into a large and complex process. Thus, for example, a study of this problem at a number of exercises attests to the fact that in operations during the nuclear period of a war, depending on the circumstances of the situation and the presence of forces and means, the buildup of efforts can be accomplished by the delivery of nuclear strikes, the commitment to the engagement of combined-arms or tank formations (large units) from the front second echelon (armies), the use of reserves, a maneuver and regrouping of troops from other axes, and the broad use of airborne landings. ✓

The buildup of efforts through the use of nuclear weapons is a new phenomenon in operational art. This is the principal method, the most decisive and effective. It enables us almost instantly to bring about radical changes in the situation and a balance of forces favorable to the attacking troops. However, in looking upon this weapon ^{50X1-HUM} powerful means for the buildup of efforts, we are not

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inclined to assess in this aspect all the nuclear strikes delivered during an operation. The experience of our operational exercises and war games attests to the fact that an immediate adjunct of the buildup of efforts are those nuclear strikes which at critical moments of an operation cause abrupt changes in the established balance of forces and means in a certain interval of time on one or another axis. Thus, the buildup of efforts will obviously include those nuclear strikes aimed primarily at destroying newly detected enemy means of nuclear attack, the destruction of his approaching reserves, and the foiling of counterstrikes by large groupings.

Along with the delivery of nuclear strikes by front means in the zone of the front offensive, strikes by medium-range strategic missiles and long-range aviation will also be delivered, in order to destroy deeply deployed enemy nuclear means: aviation at airfields; rocket troops and nuclear warhead depots; and large groupings of his troops and other important objectives. During an offensive on maritime axes nuclear weapons may be used to destroy carrier strike large units and enemy naval forces in order to carry out amphibious and airborne landings on the shore. These nuclear strikes should be considered part of the buildup of efforts in the operation.

The buildup of efforts with the aid of nuclear weapons can be accomplished by the delivery by rocket troops and front aviation of both massive and group strikes, as well as single strikes. The greatest effect, unquestionably, can be achieved by a massive nuclear strike in conjunction with the use of chemical weapons and conventional means of destruction, and the subsequent exploitation of the results by the attacking troops. However, the organization and delivery of such a strike is a rather complex matter. It requires careful preparation and the simultaneous commitment of a considerable quantity of nuclear and other means of destruction. It is advisable to deliver it in the shortest possible time against large forces and the most important enemy objectives. Therefore, during a front offensive operation, massive nuclear strikes can obviously be carried out only at certain crucial moments. Thus, in command-staff exercises and operational games in the Baltic Military

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District in 1966 to 1968, such strikes were delivered usually when destroying large advancing enemy reserves, repulsing his counterstrikes, and committing the front second echelon to the engagement.

Group nuclear strikes during an operation can, as experience from exercises shows, be delivered against enemy nuclear means, his operational reserves in concentration areas and during their advance and deployment, and against other important objectives that cannot be destroyed by a single nuclear warhead. Should it become necessary immediately to destroy newly detected enemy means of nuclear attack and other important objectives, single nuclear strikes can be delivered in the area in front of the offensive of the first-echelon large units.

The buildup of efforts by the commitment to the engagement of second-echelon troops and reserves has retained its significance in operations in a nuclear war, but it cannot be considered the primary method, as was the case in operations of the last war. Now the commitment to an engagement of forces from the depth in effect completes the buildup of efforts that was begun with nuclear strikes. The prompt exploitation of the results of nuclear strikes by fresh forces drastically alters the situation and creates favorable conditions for the successful development of the offensive.

The second echelon of the front is committed to an engagement at the most critical and complex moment in the development of the operation, and in particular when, as a result of enemy nuclear strikes or other actions by him, the striking power of the armies of the first operational echelon is considerably reduced and there is a danger that the pace of the offensive may be slowed down. The second echelon may be committed to destroy defending enemy groupings or enemy reserves advancing from the depth; when shifting the main efforts from one axis to another; and for the fulfilment of other tasks. The need to commit the second echelon to an engagement can arise both after the front fulfils its immediate task, or while it is in the process of doing so.

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The methods of committing an army of a front first echelon to an engagement depend on the conditions of the situation as it has developed, and primarily on the capabilities of the front to deliver nuclear strikes, and on the conditions and nature of the actions of our first echelon and of the enemy. Practice gained from exercises shows that under conditions of nuclear war the most acceptable method is the sequential commitment to an engagement of the second echelon, although in certain theoretical works and individual articles the opinion is still forcefully expressed as to the possibility and advisability of committing to an engagement operational formations, such as modern combined-arms and tank armies and even fronts at full strength.

Of course, the simultaneous commitment to an engagement of all the large units of the second-echelon armies produces a sharp change in our favor in the balance of forces; but to achieve this in practice is hardly possible, since the first consideration under these conditions is the need to protect the reserves from enemy nuclear destruction, both before their commitment to an engagement and at the moment of commitment. Moreover, it is necessary to commit to an engagement a quantity of forces sufficient to ensure the development of the operation. It is this factor, and not the desire to commit to an engagement as many fresh forces as possible, that should be our primary consideration. At present not only the commitment to the engagement, but even the approach to the area of commitment by such a large grouping as an army, entails great risk. It is difficult to conceal it from the enemy or to carry it out with impunity. As a result, the second-echelon army must be moved forward in individual large units and, in order to maintain their combat effectiveness, they must be committed to the engagement on the spot. Furthermore, in order to commit the second-echelon army into the engagement at full strength, it will be necessary to carve out a strip up to 100 kilometers wide. But to do this in practice is difficult, and to create similar gaps in the operational disposition of front troops deliberately, as is sometimes recommended, is very dangerous, and not a single front commander would be willing to do it. Therefore, we are firmly convinced that the most correct method is to commit operational formations to an

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engagement piecemeal, with temporary resubordination to the first-echelon army of those large units located in its zone.

The buildup of efforts during a front offensive operation by the incorporation into the first-echelon armies of individual combined-arms large units and units of special troops may result from various causes, and chiefly from a sudden drop in the combat capabilities of first-echelon troops.

According to the experience of exercises, reserve divisions may be transferred to attacking armies in order to establish superiority over the enemy on a selected axis, to repulse his counterstrikes, to secure a captured area, or to destroy a grouping or airborne landing force that has been cut off (or surrounded). In contrast to operations in the last war, when reserve large units transferred to first-echelon armies and corps were used for their overall reinforcement, now they can also be used to replace troops who have lost their combat effectiveness, including those large units whose personnel have received maximum doses of radiation. For this purpose, divisions from the front reserve, or large units regrouped from other axes, are brought in and, in an extreme emergency, large units of the front second echelon also.

An additional allocation of nuclear and chemical warheads to first-echelon armies is usually undertaken in a case where, during an operation, they have lost these means as a result of enemy strikes, or where new unforeseen tasks arise whose fulfilment requires an expenditure of forces and means not previously anticipated. This becomes necessary particularly when destroying enemy counterstrike groupings that have broken into the zone of an army from adjacent friendly troops, and in an offensive on a maritime axis when conducting operations against large amphibious landing forces. Along with the allocation from the front reserve of nuclear warheads to first-echelon armies, the reinforcement may also involve the transfer of artillery, antiaircraft, rocket, and engineer and chemical units and subunits, as well as other forces and means.

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A maneuver of forces and means in order to achieve a buildup of efforts allows the fullest possible exploitation of the results of nuclear strikes, the timely concentration of efforts, and the creation at the decisive moment of an advantageous balance of forces on decisive axes. It is carried out in order to quickly destroy enemy nuclear means and important groupings, to transfer the efforts of troops to other axes, to create the necessary groupings of troops for the development of the offensive, or to replace large units that have lost their combat effectiveness.

During an operation the maneuver can be one of nuclear weapons, front aviation, large units or even formations. In this context the term "maneuver" refers first of all to the shifting of strikes by nuclear and chemical weapons and conventional means of destruction from certain objectives to others, and also the rapid shifting of combined-arms large units (formations) in order to create an advantageous grouping of troops on one axis or another.

The maneuver of nuclear means is of decisive importance. Thus, the maneuver of front rocket troops by trajectories enables us to deliver strikes against the enemy to a depth of up to 250 kilometers. Along with the delivery of nuclear strikes, the maneuver of nuclear warheads and missiles with chemical warheads is also of great importance; this maneuver is accomplished by rocket large units and units, and also by using supplies of missiles held in reserve.

A powerful and effective means of carrying out a maneuver and a buildup of efforts during an offensive operation is front and long-range aviation. Its maneuverability, speed and great range enable front aviation in a short span of time to carry out a maneuver and concentrate its forces on any axis, and to quickly and suddenly reach strike objectives and destroy them with nuclear, chemical, and conventional warheads to a depth of up to 500 kilometers from the line of troop combat contact.

Although long-range aviation primarily fulfils tasks in accordance with the plan of the Supreme High Command, it is also an important means in the buildup of efforts in support

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of advancing front troops. Its operations may consist of delivering follow-up strikes in order to neutralize the deep reserves; and to destroy airfields and newly detected control posts of operational-strategic significance, nuclear missile-carrying submarines, carrier strike groupings that have just appeared, and important naval bases and ports on the seacoast.

The maneuver of front formations and large units also acquires great significance during the buildup of efforts in an operation. Possessing great striking power and maneuverability, they are able to quickly transfer efforts from axes to axes, and to outflank enemy groupings and deliver strikes against both his flanks and his rear. This applies primarily to tank large units and formations and to helicopter and airborne landing forces.

In carrying out a quick maneuver, especially when transferring efforts to a new axis, helicopter units acquire great importance. They make it possible to transport individual units and even large units by air in a short span of time. This will be necessary during a landing conducted into the enemy rear, or when crossing zones with strong radioactive contamination, broad areas of destruction, or forest fires. Helicopters will be used particularly extensively, in our view, when carrying out a maneuver in the so-called forward edge of the battle area. They can be used successfully to transport missiles, warheads, and missile propellant, and also to move reserves of various types and control posts.

The buildup of efforts during a front offensive operation will be greatly facilitated by airborne landings of various compositions and purposes, the use of which will make it possible to quickly shift combat operations deep into the enemy rear. This creates favorable conditions for the rapid development of the offensive by tank and mechanized forces.

In this connection we feel it is necessary to make one comment. At the present time front formations for all practical purposes do not as yet possess the necessary means for airlifting troops. Airborne and helicopter landings

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during an operation are, as before, carried out only from time to time. Meanwhile, the practice from exercises and war games convinces us more and more each year that ground forces, for all their mobility, maneuverability, and growing striking power, are not in a position, in the fastest kind of offensive, to make timely and full use of the results of nuclear strikes, even when fulfilling their immediate task. Advancing at an average pace of 50 to 70 kilometers a day, front troops reach the area of maximum range of friendly nuclear means in six to eight days, when the enemy already has had time to restore the combat effectiveness of his troops and bring up reserves from the depth. The situation is even worse when it comes to exploiting the results of nuclear strikes of strategic means, delivered to support the fulfilment of the follow-up task. It is evident that under conditions of nuclear war, airborne and helicopter landings will become as commonplace as, let us say, the commitment of large tank forces in the operational depth was in the last war. Therefore, in our view, we must create for the ground forces special independent groupings for transport by air, and include them in the composition of fronts as a permanent element of the operational disposition of the troops. It is extremely important also to have more powerful and numerous airborne landing forces, of which we spoke earlier.

The buildup of efforts in operations conducted with conventional types of weapons will have much in common with the methods of building up efforts in the last war. As in the past, an important role in the destruction of the enemy under these conditions will be played by operational formations of ground forces, and the basic means of destruction will be artillery, tanks, and aviation. The chief method of achieving the goals of a front operation will be the successive destruction of enemy groupings; therefore, the buildup of efforts will also have to be accomplished successively. It will take the form of decisive massing of forces and means and the creation of the necessary superiority over the enemy on the decisive axes, primarily by the commitment of the second echelons and reserves. However, this in no way means that the methods of accomplishing these measures remain the same as before.



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The constant threat of the enemy use of nuclear weapons requires that the troops operate in dispersed deployment on separate disconnected axes, in broader zones, without a solid front, and that they constantly execute all measures of protection against weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, the buildup of efforts will now be carried out by a rapid concentration of forces and the delivery of coordinated strikes from various axes after intense preparatory fire by conventional means. As the task is being fulfilled, the troops must again disperse.

The particular features of conducting combat operations without the use of nuclear weapons naturally will also exert an influence on the methods of building up efforts under these conditions. The most effective methods, in our view, will be the commitment to an engagement (battle) of second echelons and reserves, the massing of artillery fire, strikes by aviation and rocket troops, and a broad maneuver of forces and means.

The commitment to an engagement (battle) of the second echelons and reserves of the armies and of the front will be the basic method in the buildup of efforts, since under these conditions it is the only method by which it is possible, during an operation, to bring about a sudden change in our favor in the balance of forces, and to create the conditions for a sustained attack at a fast pace. In contrast to operations in which nuclear weapons are used, an army of a front second echelon, as in the last war, will most often be committed at the same time and at full strength. In connection with the threat of nuclear attack, the advance and deployment of troops will have to be carried out on a broader front, while large units will be committed to breaches and gaps that have formed in the operational disposition of troops. Here the commitment of second echelons and reserves will require dependable fire cover in the form of short but intense preparatory fire and fire support.

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In operations of a non-nuclear war, tank armies remain a powerful means in the buildup of efforts. They are capable of decisively penetrating any gaps in the enemy disposition and into his depth, and of delivering strikes



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from the march against the most vulnerable places. Their commitment to the engagement should be carried out after breaking through the tactical zone of defense.

The basic principle in the use of tank forces, in our view, must be their massive use not only as part of the front, but also within the framework of a strategic operation, when at the most critical moments the efforts of several tank armies of adjacent fronts are concentrated simultaneously on the most important axis.

The buildup of efforts by massive fire of all types and massive air strikes will be accomplished by the concentration of artillery on the most important axes and the use of large forces of front aviation at the most critical moments of the operation. The role of the latter has become especially important. The ability of aviation quickly to shift and concentrate efforts, as well as its great range of action, raises the question of a possible independent air operation with several air armies of fronts and of long-range aviation taking part at the same time.

A maneuver for the purposes of a buildup of efforts will be executed first of all by combined-arms large units, artillery units, and also by air and missile strikes with conventional warheads. It will take the form of a bold penetration by advancing large units and units, through poorly protected sectors, breaches, and gaps, into the depth of the enemy defense, and by breaking out onto the flanks and into the rear of his groupings of troops and to the centers of resistance. In a number of cases the maneuver can be executed for the purpose of shifting efforts from one axis to another. However, it should be borne in mind that whereas in a nuclear war the shifting of efforts can be carried out relatively quickly by a maneuver of nuclear means, in conducting an operation with conventional weapons of destruction a regrouping of troops will first be necessary, and this entails great effort in organizing dependable security and will require a great deal of time.

Airborne and amphibious landings will play an important role in the buildup of efforts under the conditions being discussed here. They can be used to help the troops achieve

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high rates of advance, negotiate large water obstacles, encircle and destroy enemy groupings, interdict his withdrawal, and also to fight his reserves and disrupt troop control and the work of the rear. Raids by small landing detachments against the enemy rear can be especially effective; in conjunction with the extensive use of special-purpose groups they will make possible heavier strikes against the control system, enemy combat means, and his reserves.

A few remarks on the essence of the buildup of efforts when both sides switch from combat operations with conventional means of destruction to limited use of nuclear weapons, for example only operational-strategic ones.

As experience from exercises shows, in examining this question we proceed first of all from the assumption that the switch to nuclear weapons is generally made at the most critical moment of an operation in order to bring about a radical change in the course of events. For this purpose all available means are brought in along with nuclear weapons, and literally all the reserves are put into action. The changeover itself is accomplished by the nearly simultaneous delivery by both sides of a massive nuclear strike. Consequently, at this turning point in the operation, all methods in the buildup of efforts that have been examined above will be more closely combined. The decisive role here will continue to be played by nuclear weapons, and the beginning of this process will be the first nuclear strike, which should establish the necessary prerequisites for the successful use of all other forces and means of the front.

The carrying out of all measures connected with the buildup of efforts in an operation, when switching over to the use of only operational-tactical nuclear weapons, on the whole, in our view, will differ little from actions under conditions of general nuclear war. However, it should ^{50X1-HUM} borne in mind that the use of only operational-tactical nuclear means will not enable us to bring effective actions to bear on the enemy simultaneously throughout the entire depth of the front operation. Their use will permit us to inflict damage only on individual enemy groupings of troops

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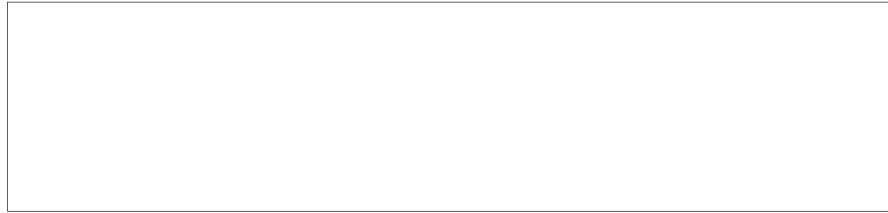
and objectives in the operational depth. Thus, in this case, as in the period of non-nuclear actions, it will be necessary to build up efforts and fulfil tasks consecutively piecemeal, but in a shorter span of time.

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With the beginning of the use of operational-tactical nuclear means, casualties among the troops will increase sharply, and therefore the reserves will become important in the buildup of efforts during this period. It is not impossible that even in the beginning it will be necessary to commit not only the second echelons of armies, but also the second echelon of the front. A major role will also be allotted to airborne landings. To achieve maximum exploitation of the results of nuclear strikes, the front command will have to refine previous plans, and possibly change the axis of the main strike and create new strike groupings of troops. The changeover from limited to unlimited use of nuclear weapons will signify the entry of the belligerent sides into general nuclear war. Under these conditions the buildup of efforts will be based on the massive use of nuclear weapons of all types and in accordance with the principles which we examined at the beginning of this article.

In conclusion it should be noted that questions concerning the buildup of efforts in a modern front offensive operation occupy a most important place in the work of a formation commander and his staff in the direction of troops. The bases of a buildup of efforts must be laid during preparation of the operation, and perhaps even earlier, in peacetime, in the process of combat and operational training of troops and staffs. During an operation it is carried out with due consideration for the nature of the combat operations, the developing situation, and the plan for destroying the enemy. The timely buildup

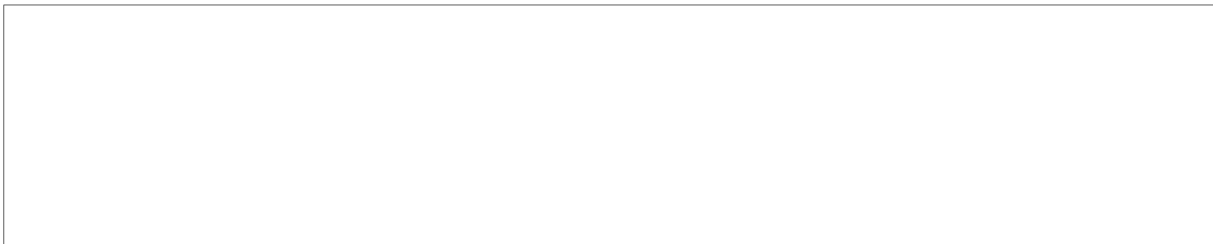
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of efforts enables us to influence the course of the operation and achieve superiority over the enemy on decisive axes, and it helps us to maintain the initiative.

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